

Christmas Tree Tips

For many people, decorating the Christmas tree is a favorite part of the holiday. The National Safety Council offers some safety tips to make sure a mishap doesn't spoil your holiday season.

Christmas Trees

A real tree can add to the spirit of Christmas by filling your home with beauty and the scent of pine. But a real tree can also pose a fire hazard. Each year, more than 400 residential fires involve Christmas trees and tragically nearly 40 deaths and 100 injuries result from those fires.

Try to select a fresh tree by looking for one that is green. The needles of pines and spruces should bend and not break and should be hard to pull off the branches. On fir species, a needle pulled from a fresh tree will snap when bent, much like a fresh carrot. Also, look for a trunk sticky with sap.

Cut off about two inches of the trunk and put the tree in a sturdy, water-holding stand. Keep the stand filled with water so the tree does not dry out quickly.

Stand your tree away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources. Make sure the tree does not block foot traffic or doorways.

If you use an artificial tree, choose one that tested and labeled as fire resistant. Artificial trees with built-in electrical systems should have the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label.

Tree lights

Only use indoor lights indoors (and outdoor lights only outdoors). Look for the UL label. Check lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Replace or repair any damaged light sets.

Also, use no more than three light sets on any one extension cord. Extension cords should be placed against the wall to avoid tripping hazards, but do not run cords under rugs.

Turn off all lights on trees and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house.

Tree ornaments

Always use the proper step stool or ladder to reach high places.

Read labels before you use materials that come in jars, cans and spray cans.

Never place lighted candles on a tree or near any flammable materials.

Avoid placing breakable tree ornaments or ones with small, detachable parts on lower branches where small children or pets can reach them.

Do not hang popcorn chains and candy canes on the tree when small children are present. They may think that other tree ornaments are also edible.